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PRESS RELEASE

KazNMU and USAID Host Family Healthcare Conference

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), through its ZdravPlus project, and the Kazakhstani National Medical University hosted the Primary Healthcare and Family Medicine conference on October 17 at the Kazakhstani National Medical University named after S.D. Asfendiar.

The conference is dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the Almaty Declaration, which was adopted by the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF in 1978, declared that “primary healthcare is the first point of contact with the national healthcare system for individuals, families, and societies. Primary healthcare ensures the easiest access for the population to healthcare, since its facilities are the closest to the people’s homes and workplaces.”

In her opening remarks Karen Welch, Health Office Director at the Regional USAID Mission for Central Asia, noted that “family medicine is the most cost-effective and patient-oriented approach to health care”. Speakers at the conference - representatives of primary healthcare organizations and foreign experts – highlighted various aspects of primary healthcare and family medicine. Students also had an opportunity to participate in interactive sessions and practical lessons on first aid, delivered by specialists from the U.S. Family Medicine Academy, members of the project *Physicians with Heart*, as well as Kazakhstani family doctors.

Primary healthcare doctors (or family doctors) play an important role in strengthening the population’s health. The rector of Kazakhstani National Medicine University, Aikan Akanov, noted that “active participation of the primary health care and family medicine doctors in the primary health care system is key for the effective implementation of health policy in health care reform. That’s why we are conducting this conference today for future medical professionals.”

The experience of the developed countries shows that the majority of the population receive medical care in primary health care facilities and from family doctors. According to a 1993 World Bank report on the effectiveness of the health care system, a well-trained primary health care doctor can diagnose and treat more than 90% of all diseases. By 2010, funding for primary healthcare in Kazakhstan will reach 40% of all healthcare expenditures.

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This conference is one of many activities implemented by USAID (<http://centralasia.usaid.gov>) in Kazakhstan. Since 1992, the American people, through USAID, have provided over \$500 million in support for Kazakhstan’s economic growth, health care system, and democratic institutions.

The Kazakhstani National Medical University (KazNMU, www.kaznmu.kz) was established in 1931 as the first medical university in Kazakhstan. More than 47,000 doctors have graduated from this university. Based on state licenses, the university trains medical specialists at nine schools (faculties).